CORD Communications

Response to Instruction; Title III; Title I, C; OIS and Textbook Adoption

CORD Algebra 1: Learning In Context

Having reviewed the scoring process, reviewer comments and Dana Center evaluations of *CORD Algebra 1: Learning in Context*, CORD Communications respectfully submits the request to have this textbook adopted and added to the state of Indiana's "Satisfactory" list. The facts presented herein show:

1. The book meets the standards implemented by the state of Indiana.

2. Perhaps due to the small number of reviews, extreme contradictions exist as to whether CORD Algebra 1 meets standards. With no clear consensus, it is unfair and unwarranted to arrive at a negative conclusion.

3. The Dana Center Review's negatives are based almost entirely on presentation, not content.

- Textbook Reviewer Evaluations

For reviews of CORD Algebra 1, there is only a single, completed review and one, partially-completed two-page review from which to base opinion.

When looking at the review from the completed form, the opinion of the reviewer is extremely positive toward the material. The reviewer stated:

"Good examples and review throughout."

"One of the better jobs I have seen of appropriate accuracy limitations on measurement and reporting."

"Seems to cover all concepts well."

While the reviewer did make some comments of concern over perceived shortcomings in Creating Equations (A-CED), no marks below a "2" (out of 4), were issued. In fact, this reviewer issued a total of three "2" rankings. The remainder of the review scored CORD Algebra 1 with marks consistently in the "3" and "4" level, with a majority on the latter.

The second review is little more than a two-page review sheet where only standards, A-CED and A-REI are considered, and only two chapters of the textbook are taken into consideration. This truncated review, along with the shear lack of any comments (positive or negative) indicates it was completed without any real in-depth, significant or thoughtful investigation.

Based on the scoring marks, the reviewer felt (using the already supplied explanations contained within the rubric):
"This text is a very unbalanced approach with emphasis on skills and procedures with little or no context or mathematical relationships," and "Mathematical ideas are approached primarily from a skill level with little connection to context or big ideas within the lessons." Even the most cursory glance through the book would have revealed the following:

- Every chapter begins with a "Why Should I Learn This" which gives examples of real people in the real world that use the skills that will be taught in the chapter.
- Most lessons begin with a real world scenario and the majority of the examples in the lesson are in context.
- At the end of every chapter there are 8 to 20 pages of real world application problems based in Agriculture & Agribusiness, Business & Marketing, Health Occupations, Family & Consumer Science, and Industrial Technology.
- Math Labs at the end of every chapter allow students to discover, investigate and discuss findings from math-based, real-world, context based activities.

Therefore, CORD Communications asks that this evaluation be stricken from the record or removed from consideration.

- **Dana Center Review**

The Dana Center review seems to be in stark contrast to the comments made by the lone textbook reviewer. Throughout the Dana Center review, there is a presumption of how an end-user/teacher will or will not conduct their classes while using CORD Algebra1. The chief negatives levied by the Dana Center are based on "might," "could," "if," and "depends," type arguments. Simply put, the Dana Center is concerned a teacher "might" omit a certain section of the chapter. These are the types of arguments that could be levied against ANY textbook. Upon further review, it also appears that certain aspects of each chapter were not taken into consideration: Math Applications and Math Labs that appear at the close of each chapter.

In the summary of evidence, ***Section 1: Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them***, the Dana Center states there are "some" opportunities to explain in the textbook's Think and Discuss sections of the practice problems. CORD feels this is an entirely misleading summation. There are **83 occurrences** of "Think and Discuss" sections in the text. This is a feature that is repeated in every single lesson, without exception. This is also supported by over 50 occurrences of "critical thinking" questions incorporated throughout the material. Additionally, there are over 60 Activities that appear at the beginning of many lessons and serve as "warm-up" exercises to help familiarize the students with upcoming material. These

activities lead to natural discussion, making explicit instruction encouraging discussion redundant.

Addressing concerns that no opportunity is provided for reflection on answers, CORD feels the teacher is best qualified to determine when or if there needs to be reflection on answers. This is an exercise which realistically cannot be regimented by the textbook. Ultimately, it is the decision of the teacher to determine when and if this is needed.

In Sections 2 and 4 of the summary of evidence, the Dana Center levies criticisms based solely on delivery of the message, not actual content. Rarely is the case made that the material is lacking, but where it lies within the text. There is concern that application problems ingrained in the unit are limited, but in the next sentence they recognize "there is an entire section of applications at the end of each chapter" and "implementation depends on the teacher." This is the exact problem/concern that accompanies ALL textbooks. If textbooks are denied based on what "might" happen with implementation, then no textbook could ever be acceptable. Additionally, the Dana Center stated in reviews of other CORD material that implementing these application problems increases meeting Common Standards.

Section 3: Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others, states there are "limited" opportunities for students to explain their reasoning. CORD would again direct the attention to the **83 occurrences** of Think and Discuss sections. Think and Discuss sections are included **every** lesson, without exception. There is also additional support from the over **50 "critical thinking"** sections contained throughout the text. Dana Center criticism completely discounts or ignores the three Math Labs that are contained within every chapter (**39 labs in total**). These Math Labs by their very nature are designed for student interaction in small groups and implicitly lead to discussion on findings/results within the group. Interaction is also facilitated within the class as lab groups are encouraged to compare, contrast and discuss the findings from each set of results. The Dana Center appears to have ignored the Math Labs, or at least considered them a supplement to the chapter material. Within the teacher's textbook and the lesson plans CD-ROM ancillary provided with the material, teachers are given a schedule of when and how to implement these labs into the classroom setting. The labs are an integral part of the learning and comprehension process. The math labs and applications are not considered an "additional learning" tool to supplement the lessons, but are an actual part of the chapter and lessons. They remain one of the cornerstone tools in the contextual, "hands-on" approach to mathematics instruction.

Section 6: Attend to precision is a generally positive review of the material. However, criticisms are noted that opportunities for students to share their methods of solution are only mentioned in the teacher's material. What better place to have this mentioned? Should this not be the prerogative of the teacher for when discussion should take place in the classroom? After all, it is the teacher that should have control of the class, not the students.

Sections 7 & 8: Use terms like "some" in describing the opportunities for students to make use of structure and express regularity in repeated reasoning. Again, CORD feels this is a misleading statement when each chapter of the text contains Math Labs, Math Applications, and Activities which are designed to encourage this type of thinking and learning. There are also Project Ideas that begin each new chapter that enable the students to become familiar with the concepts upcoming. It appears the Dana Center review is more concerned with procedure than actual content, assuming a teacher "might" or "could" choose to omit these sections of the text. Scheduling blocks and lesson plans provided to the teacher give detailed information as to when and where the Math Labs, Applications, etc. are to be taught. CORD feels strongly that if the Dana Center review had taken these important learning tools into consideration, the results would be markedly different. As it stands, this shortsighted review is in danger of taking the decision out of the hands of the people who would be charged with implementing the text in the classroom setting, the teacher.

Ultimately the teacher will always play the pivotal role in any textbook's success. Arguments based solely on what a teacher "might," or "could," do or "if this happens," are not justification for omitting CORD Algebra 1 from Indiana's list of approved textbook. Based upon comments made by Indiana textbook reviewers, some of the very teachers who would be in control of using this textbook, CORD Algebra 1 meets their needs.

Therefore, CORD Communications believes that schools in Indiana ought to have the option of choosing *CORD Algebra 1: Learning in Context*.